THEATERS — MOTION PICTURES

New York Tribune

MUSIC AND ART

PART III EIGHT PAGES SUNDAY, JANUARY 30, 19[illegible] PART III EIGHT PAGES

The Stage and Its People

Grace LaRue in "Dear Me" MAS. SCHWARZ PHOTO

Mary Blair in "Diff'rent" NICHOLAS MURAY PHOTO

Willard Mack in "Near Santa Barbara"

Sally Long in "Midnight Rounders of 1921" APEDA PHOTO

Jane Grey in "The Skin Game" ALFRED CHENEY JOHNSTON PHOTO

Dorothy Jardon at the Palace, CAMPBELL STUDIO

Dorothy Machaill in "Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic" APEDA PHOTO

As We Were Saying—

By Heywood Broun

EUGENE O'NEILL'S new play "Diff'rent is to be brought up to Broadway from its Macdougal Street beginnings to take the place of his "Emperor Jones" at matinees at the Selwyn Theater, while "The Emperor Jones" moves over to the Princess and has a theater all to itself. This seems a fair time to make a recount on O'Neill. Something ought to be done about him. He is, we think, beginning to listen to his own drumbeats. He knows what those repercussive monotones did to poor Emperor Jones. We wonder if he remembers an old story of James Huneker's called "The Lord's Prayer in B." In it an unbeliever is executed by the simple, if hideous, process of being made to listen for six days and six nights to the *Dies Irae* sung, by relays of monks, in the key of B major, to the accompaniment of B major drumbeats. Barring "The Third Kingdom," it is probably Huneker's finest story. The drums of "The Emperor Jones" run it a close second. They, too, are hideous, and beat back, probably, to the time in human memory when the drip in a cave kept a caveman cursing till he thought to profit by his misery by using it on his enemies. It became a human weapon, and thereupon it bred a human fear. It survives urbanely as a human antipathy, at the very least. It is fairly safe to say that nobody really hankers for the sound of cadenced repetition.

We will now have to return over some little ground and ask Mr. O'Neill again if he is not listening overmuch to his own drumbeats, and explain just which drumbeats we mean. Obviously, we hope, not the long-continued rumbling of his own play, or Mr. Huneker's story.

We mean those fainter and still pleasing sounds that come at the end of all of Mr. O'Neill's plays—the thud of a fallen aspiration. We have not seen or read a single one of these plays in which we did not see his hero, after a mighty grasp at heaven, fall flat on his face in the dirt. We will try an unpracticed psychanalytic hand on Mr. O'Neill and conclude that he began a complex at Harvard over the mountain which labored and brought forth a mouse.

When the first O'Neill plays appeared at the Provincetown Players' Theater they came with the bite and refreshment of cold air. We were all abundantly fed with the uplift of the arrived dramatists, and some of us hardly hoped to survive any more happy endings. The steam-heated peace and perfection of final curtains had made us willing to acclaim anything great which seemed ugly and halting and real enough to fit in with our own experiences.

But we did not mean to ask Mr. O'Neill always to leave us biting the dust. Nor do we mean to stay with him if he does. We know that life does fall into certain major patterns, but surely not always into the same one. Life has ifs rhythms, and goes both up and down. We can't feel that a man has the right to speak perpetually of starting at the top and going down, as if it were never true that he also started at the bottom and came back up. The individual has his rhythms, too. It is a fine bet that the man of forty or fifty will arrive at the splendid promise he gave at three. It's as good a one that at sixty or seventy he will have slumped back to where he was at fifteen. It may also be that at eighty he will have lost that instinctive cry for safety known as conservatism and will blossom out again, in the brief final time before he is a hundred and back beside the fireplace, waiting to die as a good party man.

We believe that a dramatist of caliber is the one who can write the rise of man as well as his fall. We believed in Eugene O'Neill in the beginning because we believed that he had started at the black end only because he felt it was being neglected. In the old-fashioned days of painting, the painter put in his blackest dab first, named it his ultimate shadow, and then painted such sun as went with it. That kept the canvas from being shrouded in the kind of shadow that too bright and too youthful a sun would cast.

So we watched and applauded when Mr. O'Neill laid on the first good round brown spot. We said he knew his business, and his canvas would repay our shouting. What we have actually seen since is nothing more nor less than Mr. O'Neill's patient, unalterable dabbing at the selfsame spot. "The Emperor Jones," we think, is the very perfection of Mr. O'Neill's brown spots. Nowhere else have we ever seen the ironic circle so impressively closed. If he had not prepared us for it by too many such as "The Moon of the Caribbees," "In the Zone," "Bound East for Cardiff," "Beyond the Horizon," "The Rope," and so on, we should have been, if possible, even more rhapsodic than we were over "The Emperor Jones." Even so, we shall continue to regard it as the finest ironic gesture our theater has known and the one most applicable to life itself. But if we had hoped that O'Neill, having finally done his best in that gallery, would then turn into another, there came "Diff'rent" to confound us. We have no consolation but his youth.

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If we have seemed to spend too much effort upon a young man whom we temporarily despair of, it is because, whatever his faults, he can still write the kind of talk for the theater that is the one thing that will redeem it. We need only listen to prevailing stage dialogue to say to ourself: "Take us back to that desponding young O'Neill."

April Blair Writes A Letter to Herself

"DEAR ME," John Golden's latest production, current at the Republic Theater, takes its name from the heroine's faculty for self-examination. The slavey in an old men's home, April Blair (Grace La Rue) keeps up a letter correspondence with herself.

"Dear Me: I take my pen in hand to tell you that I do not like the way you lost your temper with Mrs. Carney yesterday. It didn't do anybody any good. Mrs. Carney is just the same, but you are worse off.

"I took a walk the other day and saw a garden. It was full of flowers. Now you have a garden. It isn't in somebody's back yard, but in your mind. The flowers in it are the things you think and the weeds are the mean little things you do.

"And, dear me, your garden is full of weeds to-day. Now, if you hoe carefully among your thoughts as you do among your geraniums maybe some one will see a flower and want one. But who wants weeds?

"Now, I hope I don't have to write you about this again. With kindest regards to dear Mrs. Carney and all the nice old gentlemen, I close, hopefully yours. MYSELF.

"P. S.—I hope you noticed that I pulled two weeds by saying such nice things about the old inmates and their keeper."

"Winter's Tale" Is Production of Armfields

Constance Smedley Armfield, whose production of "The Winter's Tale" will be seen at the special performances at the Little Theater February 4, 5, 11 and 12, is a born darling of the gods of chance. That is, she attributes her career to chance, but any one who talks with her for a moment is bound to realize that her belief in the best in the world has aided her to success beyond any effort of mere blind chance.

When Mrs. Armfield was seventeen her first play was accepted by no less a person than Charles Wyndham. Her second play found favor with Mrs. Patrick Campbell, and for the next few years, in writing for Cyril Maude and in designing the decorations for Beerbohm Tree's "King John" and the souvenirs for his "Midsummer Night's Dream," she learned much of stagecraft and of methods of production. The privilege of being present at all rehearsals of the Campbell and Tree companies was so rare that Mrs. Armfield insists upon attributing it to chance.

When she was twenty-two Mrs. Armfield turned her back upon the stage, and since then has never written another play.

After her marriage she left London to live in the country, and there another need was apparent to her. Here were villagers absolutely without any broadening influences whatsoever. Accordingly she and her husband organized the Cotswold Players, recruited from the countryside, who traveled from village to village, frequently on bicycles, with their stage wardrobes strapped to the handlebars, and with hastily improvised settings, gave simple plays, which found enthusiastic support and wide appeal. This organization, with its range of twenty-three hamlets, began to compete in popularity with the village saloons, and its contribution to the humdrum life of the people has been immeasurable.

From this starting point evolved the plan of the Greenleaf Theater, which has passed through several experimental stages. There is nothing sensational about the plan—simply the production of classics humanly, as real plays, with real comedy, real pathos and rhythmic flow of action and speech. The costumes are simple but startlingly effective. There are no stars, no supers, no "type players." In "The Winter's Tale" the same actor plays Antigonus and Florizel.

After the Greenleaf Theater had been established and successful in England, Mr. and Mrs. Armfield came to America, for the idea of the Greenleaf Theater is not one institution in one place, but a series of groups of players, all in touch with each other, and each enriching the life of its own community.

'Chu Chin Chow,' Played 2,000 Times in London, Sets Record

By Otis Peabody Swift

From The Tribune's European Bureau

London, Jan. 6.

"CHU CHIN CHOW," the "musical tale of the East," which has been playing at His Majesty's Theater, Haymarket, since August 31, 1916, has just given its 2,000th consecutive performance and is still playing to "standing room only" crowds. The play has broken all records, both for length of the run and the number of performances, and London has decided that "Chu Chin Chow" has become as much of an institution as the British Museum.

The play is the story of "The Forty Thieves," and was produced in New York in October, 1916. It had a tremendous success there and is still being produced in America, the company being at present in Canada. Three road companies are giving the play throughout the United Kingdom, and there are other companies touring India, South Africa and Australia.

Between the acts of yesterday's performances Oscar Asche, producer and actor-manager of the play, stopped for a moment in the manager's office. He was dressed in the gorgeous yellow and black robes of his part, and spoke in the deep commanding voice that audiences know in Abu Hasan, sheik of the robber band. The Oriental figure seemed so perfect in character that he was asked whether he had felt any distinct psychological change as a result of four and a half years of living the part of an Eastern robber baron. Mr. Asche smiled and fingered his long black mandarin mustache.

"No, I cannot say that I find myself evolving into an Arabian despot," he said, "but it is true that I spend almost as much time being Abu Hasan as I do being Oscar Asche. During the holiday season, when we have two performances daily and I am on the stage for almost six and a half hours, this is particularly true. For 1,582 days—for almost 2,000 performances, although I have taken a week's vacation a number of times—I have been Abu Hasan. It has certainly made me feel at home in flowing robes and wearing a scimitar, but when I get back into civilians after the show I have no trouble in becoming an Englishman again. But it's an interesting premise. Does a man who plays a villain part long enough eventually become villainous? Or a stage minister lead a better life? There's something in the idea."

H. S. Lambert, manager of the theater, says that there are fifteen principals who have been in the cast since the opening of the play, but that acting Arabian parts has not made them Oriental. He gives many interesting facts about the long run of "Chu Chin Chow."

"More than 3,000,000 persons have seen the play in the last four and a half years," says Mr. Lambert, "and we find that many of them come to the performances again and again. One Lancashire family reserved eight stalls every Tuesday evening for two years, and either came themselves or sent

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New Theatrical Offerings

MONDAY—At the Greenwich Village Theater, Willard Mack will present himself and Clara Joel in "Near Santa Barbara." The cast: Joseph Sweeney, T. Tamamoto, Zola Talma, Charles Abbe, Howard Tuesdale, Luis Alberni and Royal Stout.

The Provincetown Players present their third bill, "The Spring," by George Cram Cook.

FRIDAY—At the Little Theater, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Armfield will present, under the New York Kindergarten Association, "The Winter's Tale," by Shakespeare, for a series of special matinee performances. The cast includes John Burr, Grace Celeste, Dorothy Johnston, Henry Stillman and Marjorie Vonnegut.

SATURDAY—At the Century Promenade, beginning at 11:30 p. m., the Shuberts will present "The Midnight Rounders of 1921." The cast: Ada Forman, Tot Qualters, Olga Cook, Ethel Davis, Bessie Clifford, Jessica Brown, Dooley and Sales, Ted Lorraine, Gladys Walton, Guiran and Marguerite, Cleveland Bronner, Ingrid Solfing, John Lowe and others.

"Broken Wing" Airplane Thrill Found in War

"Linked in the brain by a wondrous chain our thoughts are hidden." A glint of the sun, the fall of a drop of rain, is merely one of a million ways in which the chain is broken and the thought springs forth, assumes body and something new is created. Just so with a play—something so slight, so zephyrlike as to be almost intangible. By a simple mental process it assumes a solidified form and thus is created the genesis of a play.

Take "The Broken Wing," for example, which is now running at the Forty-eighth Street Theater. Paul Dickey, co-author with Charles Goddard in the writing of this dramatic success, while trying to help make the world safe for democracy as a member of the 1st Marine Flying Squadron witnessed an accident to one of his comrades in Belgium which gave him a brain flash which crystallized into an idea for this play. Here is the story as Mr. Dickey tells it:

"A Chicago boy returning with one of the marine squadrons after a raid over the German lines found it necessary to make a forced landing. The big De Haviland plane crashed over on its back into a bad smash-up on the rocks. The observer was uninjured, but the pilot received a severe concussion of the brain and a general shaking up. He was taken to a little French hospital at Dunkirk, where, from all outward appearances, he seemed to be recovering rapidly. Close observation of the case by the surgeons showed a rather strange development. While he was regaining his normal physical self, his brain sustained a slight injury which absolutely cut off his memory and knowledge of any past life. This form of amnesia continued for some time, even after he had left the Dunkirk hospital and was transferred to Calais.

"During this period of his lapse of memory he fell very much in love with a little French nurse who had taken care of him, and the wife that he had left in Chicago he had no recollection of. Six weeks later this boy's memory was brought back in a rather dramatic manner. He was sitting in a little rest room in the hospital with a number of his convalescing comrades when an old scratched record of a phonograph was playing a medley of old American songs. He constantly made his companions homesick by lifting the little needle from the dial and placing it back on the tracks of 'Home, Sweet Home.' It was this little sector of an old phonograph record that finally linked together the broken chain of his past and his memory closed up without a seam.

"I lost no time in sending my partner, Mr. Goddard, a cablegram: 'Plane crashes. Pilot amnesia. Forgets Chicago wife. Wants marry nurse. Phonograph links up past.' I suggested in a letter that followed that he give the idea the once-over and if he thought as well of it as I did to start ahead and I would be with him after the armistice. Mr. Goddard met me on my return to the States with a scheme well laid out. We decided to pick Mexico for the locale and jumped down to the border immediately to complete 'The Broken Wing.' The call of a whip-poor-will to its mate suggested the tune of 'Over There,' and we decided to use it in place of the phonograph as a means of stimulating the fine nerve cell to bridge the gulf of the past and the present. The Chicago boy has since been happily reunited with his family and he laughs over the mishap which gave birth to 'The Broken Wing.'"

The New Plays

THE three new productions to be made this week offer plenty of variety to to theater public. Willard Mack to-morrow will present "Near Santa Barbara," a new melodrama, at the Greenwich Village Theater; on Friday afternoon "The Winter's Tale" has its first performance at the Little Theater, and Saturday night will bring the opening of the new Century Promenade show, "Midnight Rounders of 1921."

"Near Santa Barbara" is a Mack melodrama with a Bret Harte flavor of the West in its setting among the foothills of California. Eastern tenderfeet running ranches, the eternal triangle—villainy and gunplay, and at the end retributive justice—is the general scheme, worked out in the Willard Mack style. Mr. Mack and Clara Joel are supported by Charles Abbe, Joseph Sweeney, T. Tamamoto, Zola Talma, Howard Truesdale, Luis Alberni and Royal Stout.

On Friday afternoon, February 4, at 3:15, "The Winter's Tale" will be presented for the first time, with a second performance on Saturday morning, at 10:45. Two more performances will be given next week on the same days at the same hours. These productions are made by Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Armfield, under the auspices of the New York Kindergarten Association. The company includes Marjorie Vonnegut, John Burr, Grace Celeste, Dorothy Johnston and Henry Stillman. The costumes, which have been designed by Mr. Armfield from ancient Bohemian and Sicilian art, and the music, which is derived from early English and Italian sources, are especially delightful.

On Saturday night at 11:30 comes the new "Midnight Rounders of 1921," the opening of which has been postponed from Monday, January 31, because of the many changes that have been made in the roof theater in preparation for this production, which is to include many novel features. The music by Jean Schwartz, the lyrics by Alfred Bryan and Cleveland Bronner has staged the musical numbers and the dances. Ada Forman, Tot Qualters, Olga Cook, Ethel Davis, Bessie Clifford, Jessica Brown, Ted Lorraine, Gladys Walton, John Lowe, Joe Browning, Laura Duby, Ingvid Solfing and others are in the large cast.

The Provincetown Players open their third bill to-morrow evening at 9 o'clock with a play entitled "The Spring," by George Cram Cook. It is a drama dealing with psychic phenomena and takes up a new phase of the conflict between faith and fact with the events interpreted by the characters from three points of view—that of the scientific investigator, of the skeptic and of the believer in spiritualism.

Gay MacLaren will give her first New York recital this afternoon at the Belmont Theater. Miss MacLaren's dramatic offering is an unusual kind of impersonation. She uses no especial costumes or scenery but depends entirely upon her own powers to create the illusion. She has a repertory of thirty plays, but has never seen either book or manuscript of any of them. She attends the play three or five times, never more, and is then able to reproduce it, imitating all the characters.

A new shuffle of plays and theaters has enabled two of St. John Ervine's dramas to find homes for regular night performances. "Mixed Marriage" will open to-morrow night at the Sixty-third Street Theater, with the same cast that has been appearing hitherto. "The Emperor Jones" moved into the Princess last night for a run, which leaves room for "Diff'rent" at the Selwyn Theater, in a series of Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday matinees. A new curtain raiser has been found for "The Emperor Jones" in Laurence Langner's "And He Never Knew," which provides the lighter note needed to precede the intense performance of Gilpin.

Grace George will resume her activities as an actress-manageress at the Playhouse to-night, when she will produce "The New Morality" for the benefit of the China Famine Fund. Following this performance the play will be put on for a series of special matinees on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

"Nice People," by Rachel Crothers, in the play chosen to open the new Klaw Theater, at 251 West Forty-fifth Street, on the evening of February 21. Sam H Harris presents Francine Larrimore in this piece, which has been played out of town and accorded a most gratifying reception. It is a comedy dealing with the manners, or lack of them, in the present-day young people, a subject which has been discussed recently in one of our serious magazines.

Beginning to-morrow evening, January 31, at the Lexington Theater, and continuing through the week, with matinees on Wednesday and Saturday, the Commonwealth Center will give benefit performances of the Russian Isba. The purpose of Commonwealth Center is threefold. First, to establish a nationalization center of arts, where foreign groups may find expression in their Old World art; second, to give opportunities to young student artists to secure recognition in opera, and third, to establish a children's theater and a permanent people's playhouse.

Ziegfeld Frames New Dancing Program for Brilliant Roof Parties

There have been several sweeps of the dance craze. It found expression in the popularity of the Castles, Maurice and Walton and Hyson and Dixon. But it has advanced and receded. Cabarets and dance places blossomed and burgeoned, then drooped.

But now the dance has become a concrete expression of the public mood. It is more popular than ever, Florenz Ziegfeld says, and from Palm Beach, where he is now resting and planning for new theatrical conquests, he is more convinced than ever of the permanency of the dance. Palm Beach crowds, which represent the essence of pleasure seekers, are dance mad. The Poinciana, Everglades Club and other fashionable centers are devoted exclusively to dancing.

That is why Mr. Ziegfeld is announcing an entirely new program for the Ziegfeld Roof beginning Tuesday evening, February 8.

He has decided to name his two new entertainments the Ziegfeld Garden Frolic, at 9 o'clock, and the Ziegfeld Midnight Frolic respectively. Each entertainment will be individual and entirely different. Miss Ann Wheaton, musical comedy star, has been engaged for both shows. Edward Royce is directing the productions.

Mr. Ziegfeld has also provided another innovation for Broadway. He is going to abolish the convert charge—a hated practice along Broadway. Dancing will begin at 7 o'clock.

The Nine o'Clock Revue will not present girls and acts from other Ziegfeld productions, but will be composed of new faces and new acts. There will be an intermission between the first and second parts for more dancing. The price of seats for the Nine o'Clock Revue has been reduced from $4 to $3.